

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION SERVICES  
351 North Mt. View Avenue, Second Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0010  
(909) 387-6280 • (800) 782-4264 • TDD (909) 387-6359 • Fax (909) 387-0102

MARGARET D. SMITH  
Interim Public Health Director

PAULA MEARES-CONRAD  
Interim Assistant Director of Public Health

MARGARET BEED, MD  
Health Officer

Contact: Margaret Beed  
Health Officer  
909-387-6218

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER WARNS OF SMOKE FROM SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRES**

**San Bernardino** - Parents and individuals with sensitive health conditions who live near areas affected by the Grass Valley fire in Lake Arrowhead and the Walker fire in Ontario should stay alert to changing smoke levels and be ready to take action, San Bernardino County Public Health Officer, Margaret Beed, advised today.

Smoky conditions can be hazardous for young children, the elderly, individuals with heart conditions or chronic lung disease such as asthma and bronchitis, and individuals with other respiratory ailments.

Because of the uncertainty of fire conditions, Beed advises residents near the fires to be prepared. Individuals with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and other lung or heart diseases should make sure that they are on medication and have at least a five-day supply on hand. Individuals with asthma should consult their physician about an asthma management plan and stick to it during unusually smoky conditions. Listen for radio and television messages about fires in your area.

Blowing dust, ashes, and other debris can be irritating and dangerous to the eyes. Wear eye protection for all hazardous activity if working around your home to secure property from fire. Sunglasses can help deflect materials flying in the air from getting caught in your eyes.

#### **For specks in the eye:**

- **DO NOT** rub the eye
- Try to let tears wash the speck out or use an eyewash.

MARK UFFER  
County Administrative Officer

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- Try lifting the upper eyelid outward and down over the lower lid.
- If the speck does not wash out, keep the eye closed, bandage it lightly, and see a doctor.

Dry, smoky air can also irritate the eyes causing burning or stinging, a gritty, sandy feeling, itchiness, and redness. Eyedrops may replace badly needed moisture and provide proper lubrication for normal eye functioning. Any pharmacy carries over-the-counter tear replacements called “artificial tears.” Ask an eye care professional or your pharmacist to recommend a solution and give you guidance on how to use it.

Beed also advised residents to be prepared to stay indoors and limit their activity if necessary. Check for a "recirculation" function on your air conditioner. If smoke is present, it will be easier to breathe indoors if air is recirculating instead of drawing smoky air from outdoors. Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptoms of such diseases.

#### **What to do if there is smoke present:**

- **Stay inside with windows and doors shut.**
- **Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car.**
- **Avoid cooking and vacuuming, which can increase pollutants indoors.**
- **Avoid physical exertion.**
- **Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.**
- **Keep at least a five-day supply of medication on hand.**
- **Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only for people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can “unmask” or produce symptoms of such diseases.**
- **Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.**

For more information about wildfire health and safety, go to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at : <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/> .

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